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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR MARCIA BERNICAT
AT
USAID FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAM IN BANGLADESH, 2010–
2015: EXPLORING SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES**

**August 13, 2015, 10:00 a.m.
Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel**

Good morning! Thank you for joining us today!

Over the past forty-five years, Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in improving the food security of its people. We have witnessed remarkable gains in agricultural productivity to the point where Bangladesh is now almost self-sufficient in rice production. Extreme poverty has decreased over the years, and as a result of greater access to health care, people are healthier and more productive than ever.

Despite these successes, Bangladesh remains vulnerable to a variety of internal and external forces. Fluctuations in world food prices, the effects of global climate change, and of course, seasonal flooding, cyclone and other natural disasters, all threaten to undo the progress already made. There is still a great deal to be done to improve the economic status and standard of living, especially for the poorest and most disadvantaged.

As many as 30 million Bangladeshis still live in extreme poverty and are continuously undernourished. Experts estimate that at least 60 million Bangladeshis lack sufficient food at least six to seven months per year. These families do not eat three meals a day nor are they eating a balanced diet. For children the situation is even more serious. The data from the 2014 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey is troubling. 36 percent of children under-five are considered to be short for their age or stunted. Stunting is a tremendously important issue in that it reflects chronic, long-term malnourishment. Stunting affects not only height but also overall health and most importantly cognitive development. This is why the United States Government has been

working on food security and food assistance since shortly after Bangladesh's independence and why we remain committed to addressing these issue.

We are here today to celebrate the conclusion of three outstanding food assistance development projects, to learn from their successes and explore the opportunities that lay ahead. Over the past five years, USAID's Food for Peace program has reached 3.5 million of Bangladesh's poorest and most vulnerable people through these key projects. I am also very pleased to announce today that this year, USAID will launch a new, five-year \$180 million phase of its Food for Peace program to address food insecurity among the poorest and most vulnerable people in Bangladesh.

The new phase of the Food for Peace program, building on the successes of the past five years, will address three ongoing objectives – enhancing food security by increasing the production, consumption and marketing of locally produced agricultural products; addressing malnutrition by improving diets and helping families adequately feed their children; and increasing resilience by helping government agencies and communities prepare for inevitable disasters and recover from them more quickly and successfully.

This battle against food insecurity, malnutrition and natural disasters is not won in a day or a year. It is an ongoing effort to build institutions, communities and families. It involves working in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh at all levels, the donor community, civil society and private enterprise, to develop strategies that make Bangladesh stronger, more resilient and more capable of marshaling and applying resources to address these acute needs. We will only be successful in this effort by working together, building strong partnerships and sharing the knowledge we have with each other, as we will do here today.

I am pleased you could join me today for this very important event. Thank you for what you have done in the past, but more importantly, for what you continue to do and will do in the future. And I look forward to continuing this dialogue and partnership with you and your organizations in the coming months and years.

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**As prepared for delivery*